

ACTION SCA-00

INFO	LOG-00	EEB-00	AID-00	AEX-00	CIAE-00	CPR-00	INL-00
	DOEE-00	DOTE-00	PERC-00	DS-00	DHSE-00	EUR-00	OIGO-00
	FAAE-00	VCI-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01
	L-00	MOFM-00	MOF-00	M-00	VCIE-00	NEA-00	DCP-00
	NSAE-00	ISN-00	NSCE-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00	PA-00	PM-00
	GIWI-00	PRS-00	P-00	SCT-00	ISNE-00	DOHS-00	FMPC-00
	SP-00	IRM-00	TRSE-00	IIP-00	SCRS-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	FA-00	SWCI-00
	/001W						

-----FB0319 141006Z /38

R 140958Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
SECDEF WASHDC
SECSTATE WASHDC 1182
COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
ARCENT INTEL FT MCPHERSON GA
COMUSARCENT KU INTEL CAMP DOHA KU
INFO CIS COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
JOINT STAFF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC 0134

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUSHANBE 001396

ARCENT PLEASE PASS TO IMA; DEPT FOR SCA; DIA FOR DHO-2; OSC
FOR OSD/P; JOINT STAFF FOR J-5; CENTCOM FOR CCJ5; SOCCENT
FOR J33

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/15/2018

TAGS: [AF](#) [MAS](#) [MCA](#) [P](#) [OVIP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR ARCENT COMMANDER LTG LOVELACE,S 20
NOVEMBER VISIT TO DUSHANBE

Classified By: Ambassador Tracey A. Jacobson for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Embassy Dushanbe looks forward to the upcoming visit of LTG Lovelace. Since Tajikistan,s limited defense capability consists primarily of Russian-influenced ground forces, the position of the ARCENT Commander is ideal to pursue basic and sorely needed reforms as well as further joint Tajik-Afghan security cooperation programs. Following is a brief overview of the current situation in Tajikistan and our thoughts on the key issues LTG Lovelace should discuss during his visit.

POLITICAL OVERVIEW - STAGNATION IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

¶2. (C) Tajikistan approaches its next winter ill-prepared for the inevitable power shortages andintensified food insecurity. The GOTI claims it has stockpiled food and fuel, but we cannot verify this and other donors report a continuing unwillingness by the GOTI to coordinate with them. The global financial crisis has yet to hit ordinary Tajiks, as the remittances from Russia which support so many continue to pour in. However, a downturn in the Russian construction sector could have serious impact on Tajikistan. If this happens in the next few months, it could hit Tajikistan simultaneously with less money for food during the difficult winter period, and possibly more unemployed Tajiks returning home with no job prospects.

¶3. (C) If the Government is feeling any effects from the financial crisis and the decline of world aluminum prices by over a third since July, it is not yet evident. The Government continues to make payments for construction of the massive \$300 million presidential palace in the center of Dushanbe, which will be complete in December. Work on other presidential dachas around the country goes on.

¶4. (C) Tajikistan's political leadership continues to stagnate, with some signs of increased intolerance of alternate viewpoints. The Government appears to be

increasing pressure on foreign religious organizations, by deporting religious NGO staff and banning activities of some churches, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses. For other motivations, namely property expropriation, the Mayor of Dushanbe is forcing the U.S. affiliated Grace Sun Min Church out of property it legally acquired several years ago. The Mayor has reportedly told his staff he is "unafraid" of the U.S. Embassy, which has sent diplomatic notes on behalf of the Church and monitored legal proceedings in the case. Observers of the case use it as an example of the Mayor's willingness and ability to manipulate the court system, getting the judge in the case to make rulings that contradict the facts and the law. There has been a U.S. congressional inquiry concerning this case. In other fields, the Foreign Ministry has refused to meet with Department officials that it invited to Tajikistan to discuss the Nuclear Smuggling Outreach Initiative, and the Ministry of Justice has rebuffed efforts by donors to assist in rewriting the criminal procedure code.

POLITICAL SONG AND DANCE

15. (C) Rahmon has attempted to firm up his control of the regions in the face of opposition which has been violent on at least one occasion. In response to demonstrations last spring against government activities in Badakhshan, and the February killing of the national police special unit commander during an attempted arrest in Gharm, Rahmon recently traveled to both regions, bringing clothing, computers, tractors, and other "gifts" for the local population (he also has brought hundreds of dancers and singers on these regional visits). In the case of Badakhshan, contacts there report that the President's July visit was a success, in that it undermined any legitimacy that local protest organizers had (they were reportedly drug smugglers angry at government pressure on them, despite the ostensibly political reasons for the demonstrations). The early October visit to Gharm is harder to assess. The region is generally anti-government, but Rahmon showed that he could go there and get some results; the local police officer and ex-oppositionist who was behind the killing of the police special unit commander agreed to step down and have his unit disbanded. He also turned in several weapons, although sources in Gharm dismiss the handover as small in comparison to the numbers of illegal weapons floating around the area. President Rahmon's nascent personality cult was on display during the Rasht visit; excessive and repetitive television coverage of his public meetings there featured locals calling him "king of kings" and saying there was no need for any further elections in Tajikistan.

16. (C) Tajikistan's long-term political and developmental challenges have not gone away. Economic flight of Tajiks to Russia continues, and in rural areas embassy contacts report that boys as young as their mid-teens are now leaving to look for work abroad. More women are leaving as well, as are those with higher education. The embassy does not see an imminent threat from conservative Islamic movements, but the Government's fear of fundamentalist Islam is obviously increasing. In mid-October the Government announced that the Salafi movement would be banned, and Salafis are now barred from mosques (as are women and boys under eighteen years old). Identifying Salafis is a mysterious process, but to the degree that they exist in Tajikistan they will certainly be driven underground and further radicalized by this measure.

ECONOMIC STEPS, AND MISSTEPS

17. (C) The Government says it plans to develop domestic sources of alumina to supply the giant Talco aluminum plant at Tursunzade, however this plan is years away from execution. As noted above, low aluminum prices are likely reducing revenues from Talco. The international press has reported extensively on the lawsuit involving Talco in London. Tajikistan has reportedly spent over \$150 million (approximately 5% of the country's 2007 GDP) pursuing a case that experts give it very little chance of winning. Trial

proceedings have commenced in the case, in which Tajikistan is pursuing the old Talco management for stealing Talco revenue, and the old management team has lodged counter accusations of massive fraud. An audit of Talco is in the offing, as part of the Government's agreement with the IMF to resolve the latest misreporting scandal; but whether the audit will encompass the offshore company through which Talco's revenues reportedly flow is still in doubt. The audit and staff monitoring program at the Central Bank is due to conclude by November 10, with a preliminary report to come out by the end of the month.

¶18. (U/FOUO) In late-August Tajikistan and Afghanistan signed a Power Purchase Agreement for electricity supplies from Tajikistan to Afghanistan, opening the door to ADB financing to construct a 220 kv transmission line to Kunduz by spring ¶2010. The Government is funding construction of the giant Rogun Dam project, to the tune of \$50 to 100 million per year, but it has so far been unable to secure international involvement in the project.

¶19. (C) Reform of the agricultural sector continues to be Q9. (C) Reform of the agricultural sector continues to be largely rhetorical; farmers are still forced to grow cotton, students are forced to pick it, and a few well-connected investors continue to squeeze everyone else with unfair labor practices and below-market prices. State Department's Office of Global Affairs Trafficking in Persons (G/TIP) recently visited Tajikistan, and expressed concern about students forced to pick cotton. The New York Times has also picked up on abuses in the Tajik cotton sector. The cotton sector is headed for serious troubles; disruptions last year due to extreme cold and financial uncertainties stemming from delays in land reform legislation, have led to a low harvest this year. Cotton investors will likely respond to this situation by squeezing farmers even more.

THE ECONOMY - TAJIKS LOOK FOR THE EXITS

¶10. (C) Estimates are for inflation to reach 20% this year, and prices for basic foodstuffs are often double last year's prices. With few legitimate business opportunities in Tajikistan, and deteriorating education and other public services, much of the population relies on remittances from Tajiks working abroad. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the percentage of Tajiks who move abroad to seek permanent or temporary work (estimated at 50 percent of the working population) is increasing. Tajik social indicators are declining, health care and educational systems are degenerating, and young Tajiks are arguably worse prepared for life than those who grew up under the Soviet Union. The business climate is not improving. Tajikistan remains a remarkably difficult place to do business, and the climate shows few signs of improving.

¶11. (C) Last year's unusually harsh winter damaged crops and seed stores. It was followed by drought and locust infestations in spring and early summer, resulting in lower food production this year. Combined with mounting agricultural debts and rapidly increasing food prices, rural families who sold their tools and livestock to survive last winter are headed into the next winter in poor shape to deal with its difficulties. Tajikistan is highly dependent on imports for its food supply and is vulnerable to the ongoing worldwide food price increases. We expect food insecurity to worsen.

¶12. (C) International investors do not view Tajikistan as a viable place to do business. Would-be investors, large and small, find themselves stymied by corruption at all levels, and local investors have been the targets of property grabs by the well-connected. Foreign investors must also overcome restrictive visa rules, lack of air connections, and the government's suspicion of foreign involvement in any sphere. What little foreign investment exists is state-sponsored or directed from Iran, China, and Russia. The President has formed an Investment Council, including participation of foreign investors, and attended a meeting with American

businesses in New York during the UNGA. While the meeting in New York saw some frank comments from would-be investors, it is too soon to tell whether they will have any impact on Rahmon.

¶13. (C) In general, the political and economic background of your security-related agenda is not positive. Constriction of political space, intolerance of religion, obstruction of foreign assistance and investment, a leadership single-mindedly committed to personal enrichment, short-term gain, and control of the economy at the expense of economic growth; these factors have retarded Tajikistan's development and driven hundreds of thousands of Tajiks to emigrate. Embassy's earlier analyses predicted these would lead to an eventual breakdown, but not for several years. We are watching closely to see whether the global financial crisis should change our time calculus. Tajikistan's banking sector is isolated, but the country is highly food-insecure and vulnerable to disruptions in the Russian economy or decline in the world price of aluminum.

COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES

¶14. (C) Bridge: Use of the Tajikistan-Afghanistan bridge at Nizhny Pyanj is growing. About 200 trucks a day now cross the bridge going north. However, obstacles to full use of the bridge remain; there are still no provisions for pedestrian traffic, and it remains difficult for Afghans to obtain a Tajikistani visa, both because of bureaucratic delays and demands for bribes from Tajikistani consular officials. The inspection facilities at the Tajikistan end of the bridge are complete, and the Customs Agency has assumed responsibility for that location. However, the Agency has stated it will not occupy the facilities until several outstanding construction projects are complete, such as parking lots, lighting, and pedestrian walkways. The Army Corps of Engineers (Kabul District) is addressing these needs, albeit slowly.

¶15. (C) Narcotics: Cooperation on narcotics continues to be a relative bright spot, but only superficially. While Tajikistan's law enforcement and security services seize more narcotics than other Central Asian states (and overall narcotics seizures were up 19% over 2007), they are not willing to take on the arrest and prosecution of narcotics smuggling ring leaders, some of whom are politically well-connected. Three successful interdiction missions on the Tajik-Afghan border in August by the SOCCENT-trained Border Guard Separate Group for Special Reconnaissance are examples of recent operational highlights. We promote and see active and productive cooperation between the Tajik, Kyrgyz, and Afghan drug agencies. In a mid-October speech, President Rahmon called for joint Tajik-Afghan law enforcement training. While we welcome and will vigorously pursue this opening, Border Guard and Committee on National Security generals have obstructed any forward movement on joint training of their service personnel in the past.

¶16. (C) Security Cooperation: Security Cooperation remains a strong part of our relationship, as we pursue shared interests in building stability in Afghanistan. The Tajikistani Ministry of Defense is opening up to cooperation with Afghanistan. The Tajikistani Military Institute began training 30 officers from Afghanistan in November. This seems to be a sincere effort to assist in the process of building stability in Afghanistan, and stands in sharp contrast to Tajikistan's Border Guards' refusal to allow joint training with Afghan counterparts. Tajikistan has also accepted the Global Peacekeeping Operations Initiative (GPOI), funded at \$2.5 million. The Ministry of Defense received a CENTCOM GPOI delegation in late June, and with CENTCOM's advisory assistance and limited infrastructure upgrades, is committed to deploying a company of peacekeeping troops by 2010. GPOI provides an opportunity to build a critical capability that will not only allow Tajikistan to "show the flag" on an international scale, but will also offer training and reform opportunities to other cadre within

the Ministry of Defense. The embassy is working closely with the Ministry of Defense to synchronize training and support to make this unit a reality. After overcoming a series of delays in obtaining Tajik visas for the Afghan contractor, the rebuild of three border outposts has begun along the Tajik-Afghan border.

¶17. (C) Regional Integration: Efforts to spark regional integration between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and more broadly between Central and South Asia, have seen some recent successes. In August Tajikistan signed a commercial power purchase agreement with Afghanistan, paving the way for sales of seasonal hydroelectricity to the Afghan grid starting in spring 2010. In late-October the USG hosted a conference of Central and South Asian aviation sector officials and companies, to foster quicker integration of their markets. USDA and State Department are following up on this conference to implement a consultative mechanism to address issues raised there. However, Tajikistan's relations with Uzbekistan remain poor, and there has been no progress toward resolution of Uzbekistan's opposition to construction of the Rogun Dam.

PROPOSED TALKING POINTS

¶18. (U//FOUO) During your bilateral meetings with Mobile Forces Commander General-Major (U.S. 1-star equivalent) Faziyeu and the Commandant of the Military Institute General-Major Teshaev, Embassy Dushanbe recommends emphasizing the following points.

For GEN-MAJ Faziyeu, Mobile Forces Commander:

--(U//FOUO) I appreciate Tajikistan's continuing support to the United States in the CENTCOM's area of responsibility. The generous SOFA, blanket overflight clearances and emergency divert agreement granted to DoD are a significant gesture of support, save valuable time and resources, and significantly contribute to the development of a stable Afghanistan. (Background note: On 11 NOV post submitted the diplomatic note for the renewal of CY09 over flight clearances. CJCS ADM Mullen also sent a letter to his Tajik counterpart GEN-LT (U.S. 2-star equivalent) Nadirov emphasizing the importance of this privilege. Because the Tajik government is currently deciding this issue, your emphasis on this point is very timely.)

--(U//FOUO) I am very encouraged by the Ministry of Defense's acceptance of the Global Peacekeeping Operations Initiative. The battalion-sized installation that the Ministry of Defense offered for the PKO unit is in excellent condition. We look to Tajikistan to fully man and equip the unit and then wisely focus other available security assistance program funds on the formation of this discrete PKO unit. CENTCOM will use GPOI funds for training the PKO cadre as well as for limited upgrades to the unit facility. I encourage you to actively participate in the January Action Officer Working Group in Dushanbe to help shape the FY 2010 military to military plan. This is your forum to ensure that you receive the necessary support for establishing the PKO unit. Our planners at CENTCOM are working diligently to provide you with feedback from the July assessment visit.

--(U//FOUO) I understand Tajikistan faced numerous food and energy shortages this past winter. I am concerned that Tajikistan may encounter similar problems this winter, which could have consequences for regional cooperation efforts with Afghanistan. How do you plan to address this potential crisis and will the Tajik military play any role in its solution?

For GEN-MAJ Teshaev, Commandant of the Military Institute:

--(U//FOUO) I welcome the steps taken by Tajikistan to build Afghanistan's capacity. Specifically, I am pleased that the

Tajikistani Ministry of Defense's Military Institute is currently training 30 Afghan officers. What is the program of instruction? Are the U.S.-provided generator and furniture meeting your needs? This is the second time you've trained Afghans (they trained Afghan cadets in 2004). Do you have plans for more joint training in the future? More joint initiatives with Afghanistan are welcomed in the security arena and your suggestions are welcomed in how we can help you build on this initiative.

--(U/FOUO) Thanks in advance to the Ministry of Defense for hosting Exercise Regional Cooperation 09 (AUG 09). Specifically, thanks to you for providing some of your facilities as a forum for the exercise. I hope that the national disaster response/medical scenario and the exercise-related construction are beneficial to your long term efforts here at the institute.

19. (U) POC: Lieutenant Colonel Dan Green, USA, Defense and Army Attache, USDAO Dushanbe, Voice: (992)(37) 229-2701, Cell: (992) (90) 700-7030, classified email: digredy(AT)dia.smil.mil or GreenDR2(AT)state.sgov.gov. Unclass email: GreenDR2(AT)state.gov.
JACOBSON